



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Kelli Linville

## Session Report 2006

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**Committees:**

- Economic Development,  
Agriculture & Trade  
—Chair
- Appropriations

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Thank you for allowing me to represent you and our Whatcom County communities in the Legislature. As chair of the Economic Development, Agriculture and Trade Committee and member of the Appropriations Committee, I've continued to work hard to bring more jobs to Northwest Washington, improve education for our children, and deliver more affordable health care options to families.

In 2006:

- Local communities—such as the Bellingham waterfront re-development—can draw in more jobs thanks to a bill I sponsored creating a new way (called LIFT - Local Infrastructure Financing Tool) to pay for infrastructure.
- Children and young people received more help with meeting our state's education standards.
- Patients, doctors and all of us benefited from a breakthrough compromise on reforms to reduce medical malpractice costs, increase patient safety and allow improvements in health care.
- Our families and communities became better protected against the worst sex offenders, meth cooks and identity thieves, thanks to a number of laws cracking down on crime.

Please read on for a brief look at the short 59-day session. As always, I would love to hear from you...your feedback helps me represent you in our state government.

Sincerely,

Kelli Linville • 42nd District



# Representative Kelli Linville

## Retaining and Creating Jobs

### LIFT – A tool for local governments to spur economic development

Local governments need economic tools to attract and retain job-creating industries. I prime sponsored House Bill 2673, which created a new way for cities and counties to promote job creation and economic development: the Local Infrastructure Financing Tool (LIFT).

Local governments will be able to build infrastructure, such as water lines and roads, by issuing bonds based on future tax revenue. Washington State joined almost all other states with a form of this tool when the Legislature passed the LIFT bill.

One of the initial pilot projects is the Bellingham Waterfront re-development. LIFT will provide \$1 million a year for 25 years, and help create good jobs on the former Georgia-Pacific property.

## Community Sewer and Water Projects

Since 1986, the Public Works Trust fund has created jobs and improved our quality of life, with no- or low-interest loans to local government for repair, replacement, or improvement of bridges, roads, water and sewage systems, and solid waste and recycling facilities. I prime sponsored House Bill 2337, which included two Whatcom County Public Works projects: increased sewer capacity for Birch Bay, and replacement of an aging dam on the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River with a more efficient system.

## Supporting Small Business

Strong, vibrant small businesses are essential to our local economy. Three out of every five jobs in the state are in small business. This year, I supported a number of bills to help small businesses stay in the black, including:

- **Tax relief for small businesses** (HB 2671): Small businesses already burdened with paperwork will get relief from an early tax deadline and penalty, since we repealed the 5 percent penalty for late payment and changed tax due dates to the 25th day of month, not the 20th.
- **Small business personal property tax exemption** (HB 3164): We raised the personal property tax exemption from \$3,000 to \$15,000 for items owned by small owner-operated businesses (office equipment, computers, etc.).
- **Small Business Health Insurance Partnership** (HB 2572): A new voluntary partnership would blend employer and employee dollars with state assistance to make good health coverage affordable for employers and employees. This is a new choice for businesses, not a mandate. And there is no business red tape or paperwork, since the employee makes the application.



## Agriculture and Water

Farmers and the agricultural industry—one of our state's top employers—had a banner year in 2006. Decades of haggling came to an end with a breakthrough compromise agreement that will preserve the Columbia River for farmers, commerce, and fish. The breakthrough plan calls for money for water storage, innovative agreements between water users and the state to use water more efficiently and protect valuable habitat for fish, and balanced water usage.

### Other major agriculture wins include:

- **Relief for farm diesel costs** (HB 2424): The increasing fuel costs of farming, from diesel for trucks and tractors to fertilizer, are beginning to wipe out farmers in Washington State. To retain rural agricultural jobs, we eliminated the sales tax on diesel used for agriculture.
- **Help on the expense of maintaining farm equipment** (HB 2457): Stretching a buck has always been a way of life for our state's farmers. To support family farmers, we passed a measure to exempt replacement parts for farm machinery from sales tax.
- **Northwest Agriculture Business Incubator**: We invested \$350,000 in the 2005-07 budget to help small farms earn more through innovations.
- **Earning non-farm income on farmland** (HB 2917): An average 10 percent of farmer income actually comes from farm work. A vast majority of farmers earn money from non-farm work, so this bill gives some flexibility to local governments on growth management decisions for farms.
- **Dairy and seafood processors receive the same tax credits as fruit and vegetable processors** (HB 3159, prime sponsor)

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## Aluminum smelters – Keeping Intalco Jobs in Whatcom County

During the 2001 energy crisis, the spiking costs of electricity caused most of the state's aluminum smelters to shut down. The Alcoa/Intalco aluminum smelting plant in Ferndale, which provides good family wage jobs in Whatcom County, stayed open. I joined the other area legislators in passing an extension of tax relief to 2012 to keep the plant running.

## Energy from Farms

Energy—for our cars, trucks, home heating, and power needs—keeps our economy moving. As a state we can begin the journey to energy freedom through biofuels—biodiesel and ethanol—from local crops and agricultural wastes. They reduce our dependence on petroleum and imported oil, cut air pollution, and strengthen our farm industry and rural communities. I supported market access to biofuels and low-interest loans and grants for biofuel energy projects, such as anaerobic digesters, around the state.



## A Prudent Budget – Savings and Investments

This year our state was fortunate to have a positive budget forecast: \$1.57 billion. We chose to save for the future, while making smart investments for school children, health care, veterans, senior citizens, small business support, and energy freedom in the 2006 budget.

The budget **saves over \$940 million—almost two dollars for every dollar invested**, with an eye toward future needs from increased school enrollments, rising health care costs, pension requirements and other costs on the horizon.

## Education – Our Children's Future

### Helping students succeed on the WASL

Washington State sets high standards to graduate from high school, a necessity in today's competitive global job market. Starting with this year's sophomores, the WASL test will also be required.

As part of the state's plan to give students a fair chance to earn their diploma, the legislature funded voluntary retakes this year for 11th-grade students. We also passed tutoring and summer school programs, as well as alternatives for students to demonstrate the mandatory skills needed to graduate.

**Overall, the 2005-07 Legislature increased state funding for Washington's public schools by \$1.45 billion – about \$1,490 per student.**

The 2006 budget contains:

- \$28.5 million for remedial help for students struggling with the WASL .
- \$13 million to help students with math and science.
- \$50 million for K-12 employee salary increases.
- \$4 million for Navigation 101, a mentoring program that involves parents and teachers to help students align their high school classes with their career goals. This is a highly successful program that has reduced drop out rates, improved student performance and inspired students to take more challenging courses.



## Investing in Higher Education

Higher education, a ticket to success for many students and for our state's economy, continues to need help. We created almost 500 more enrollments in high-demand fields such as nursing, engineering, math, and science.

At Western Washington University, we invested almost \$124 million in the 2006 budget, including:

- Helping planning efforts to coordinate expansion of the university's campus to the Bellingham waterfront – \$400,000
- Establishing a planning and emergency management program at Western Washington University – \$250,000
- Investing in the Border Policy Research Institute – \$250,000



# Representative Kelli Linville

## Health Care and Public Safety

### Progress on reducing medical malpractice costs

I supported a ground-breaking compromise that saves lives by reducing medical errors, lowers insurance premiums for doctors, and reforms our civil liability system. The goal of medical malpractice reform has always been to make patients safe and to do away with frivolous lawsuits.



We made progress, but there's still a pressing need to keep doctors and other health care providers in our communities. I will remain vigilant in pushing smart reforms in health care.

### Patient safety

We encouraged patient safety by protecting apologies and expressions of regret by health care providers who have committed medical errors and encouraging reports of unprofessional conduct. The plan also includes stricter penalties for negligent health care providers.

### Community Clinics

Community clinics, such as Interfaith Community Health Center and Sea Mar Health Centers in Whatcom County, offer much-needed health services to children and families. We added \$2 million to last year's \$19 million in grants to these cost-effective and efficient local health providers. The clinics will also benefit from increased coverage for low-income children.

### Tough New Laws on Sex Offenders, Meth Cooks and Identity Thieves

This year, we toughened penalties on dangerous sex predators who hurt our children and vulnerable adults, and increased monitoring to help prevent future attacks. I supported a package of bills that increased penalties to 25 years to life for many of the most dangerous sex offenders, required 24-7 GPS monitoring of homeless sex offenders, made those who possess child pornography register as sex offenders, and more.

I also voted to crack down on meth cooks, with new laws to give resources to local law enforcement in the battle against meth, help to children exposed to meth labs, authority to local health departments to condemn meth lab sites, and access to addiction treatment for convicted offenders. We also restricted several meth ingredients.

Identity theft continues to be a rising problem, with Washington State in the top ten per capita with this crime. We made ID theft a tougher "crime against persons" to give prosecutors the tools they need to put this new type of criminal behind bars.



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